

High Skills, High Wages

Washington's Strategic Plan for Workforce Development

JUNE 2000

Executive Summary



WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

The Vision

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board is Washington State's valued and trusted source of leadership for the workforce development system.

Mission Statement

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board's mission is to bring business, labor, and the public sector together to shape strategies to best meet the state and local workforce and employer needs of Washington in order to create and sustain a high skill, high wage economy.

To fulfill this Mission, Board members, with the support of staff, work together to:

- Advise the Governor and Legislature on workforce development policy.
- Promote a system of workforce development that responds to the lifelong learning needs of the current and future workforce.
- Advocate for the non-baccalaureate training and education needs of workers and employers.
- Facilitate innovations in workforce development policy and practices.
- Ensure system quality and accountability by evaluating results and supporting high standards and continuous improvement.

Board Members

Rich Nafziger <i>Acting Chair</i>	Geraldine Coleman <i>Representing Business</i>	Gay Kiesling <i>Representing Labor</i>	<i>Participating Officials</i>
Rick Bender <i>Representing Labor</i>	Carver Gayton <i>Commissioner State Employment Security Department</i>	Tony Lee <i>Representing Targeted Populations</i>	Jesse Palacios <i>Yakima County Commissioner Representing Local Elected Officials</i>
Terry Bergeson <i>State Superintendent of Public Instruction</i>	Earl Hale <i>Executive Director State Board for Community and Technical Colleges</i>	John McGinnis <i>Representing Labor</i>	Dennis Braddock, <i>Secretary, State Department of Social and Health Services</i>
Don Brunell <i>Representing Business</i>		Joseph J. Pinzone <i>Representing Business</i>	
Ellen O'Brien Saunders <i>Executive Director</i>			

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STATE OF WASHINGTON

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Governor Locke and Members of the Legislature:

We are pleased to forward *High Skills, High Wages: Washington's Strategic Plan for Workforce Development* to you for your consideration.

Our plan proposes four long-term goals for the state's workforce development system:

- Closing the skills gap.
- Training incumbent and dislocated workers so they are prepared for economic change.
- Developing a wage progression strategy for low-income individuals.
- Building WorkSource, Washington's one-stop system for access to workforce development resources.

To accomplish these goals and to make the system more responsive to the needs of students, workers, and employers during the next five years, we are committed to a set of specific strategies.

We have set performance targets that are among the highest in the nation. We are willing to be held accountable for our results. We will continue our progress in improving coordination, customer access and customer satisfaction. We will make WorkSource a reality so workforce development programs are customer-friendly, widely accessible, and fully committed to continuous improvement.

We know how much a family-wage job means to every adult worker. We know that young people who don't succeed in school face a steep hill to climb to economic self-sufficiency and a sense of belonging to the larger community. And, we know that unprepared employees prevent our businesses from realizing their potential.

Our success will depend upon an unprecedented degree of collaboration among public agencies and institutions, local workforce development councils, private providers of training and education, community organizations, employers, students, unions, and workers. The stakes are high; the potential rewards for our state even higher.

We look forward to working with you to implement this ambitious agenda for positive change.

Sincerely,

Rich Nafziger

Acting Chair

Rick Bender

Representing Labor

Terry Bergeson

Superintendent of Public Instruction

Don Brunell

Representing Business

Geraldine Coleman

Representing Business

Carver Gayton, *Commissioner*

Employment Security Department

Earl Hale, *Executive Director*

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

Gay Kiesling

Representing Labor

Tony Lee

Representing Targeted Populations

John McGinnis

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Joseph J. Pinzone

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Participating Officials

Jesse Palacios, *Yakima County Commissioner*

Representing Local Elected Officials

Dennis Braddock, *Secretary*

Department of Social and Health Services

High Skills, High Wages

The Impetus for Change

A Dynamic Economy That Demands High Skills

Washington's economy is robust. Unemployment is the lowest it has been for decades. Job opportunities abound in the tight labor market of the Puget Sound, and employers around the state are having a hard time finding qualified applicants. Making the most of this economy, however, depends in part on where you live and the skills you have.

For years, Washington's resource-based economy generated high paying jobs with benefits for workers with only a high school education. Now these traditional sources of high-wage work are either shrinking or have limited prospects for growth. Our new economy is knowledge-based, and many of the fastest growing, best paying jobs are technical. The majority of family-wage jobs with benefits created in Washington will require postsecondary education, but not necessarily a four-year degree.

— Continued —

“The main engine of growth is the accumulation of human capital—of knowledge—and the main source of differences in living standards among nations is differences in human capital.”

Robert Lucas, Nobel Laureate in Economics, “Making a Miracle,” *Econometrica*, March 1993

“So whereas it took decades for boiler-makers, cobblers, and elevator operators to become outmoded, in today’s climate, factory workers, or even computer programmers can become obsolete in just a few years.”

Patrick Barta, “In Current Expansion, As Business Booms, So Do Layoffs,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 2000

The rise and fall of industries coupled with profound technological changes within industries have created a serious dislocated worker problem in our state. Recent estimates suggest that the number of dislocated workers in the state has been increasing, despite our robust economy. There were roughly 41,500 dislocated workers in 1999, and the annual number is expected to increase to 53,000 in 2001.

Additionally, structural change has exacerbated economic inequality across regions. Nowhere is the decline of resource-based jobs more keenly felt than in rural Washington. The state’s unemployment rate hovers around 4 percent, but 11 of our rural counties had unemployment rates in excess of 9 percent in 1998. The Corporation for Enterprise Development recently rated Washington as having one of the highest urban/rural income disparities in the nation.

Scarcity of Skilled Workers and the Increasing Gap Between the Haves and Have-Nots

Starting in the mid-1970s, income inequality in America worsened, and studies suggest that pervasive technological change is the culprit. But, investment in technology also is a primary reason behind the recent turnaround in both wages and productivity. Productivity rose at an annual rate of 2.6 percent from 1996 through 1999, more than double the 1.1 percent annual growth rate of the previous 20 years. Technology also has led to an increase in demand for highly skilled workers in all sectors of the

economy. The supply of highly skilled workers, however, has not kept up with demand, and the earnings gap between more-educated and less-educated workers has widened dramatically.

For many Americans living standards and quality of life deteriorated during the 1980s. Washington did not escape the national trend. Statewide, real average wages declined by 8.8 percent between 1979 and 1989. The trend reversed after 1989, but it was not until 1997 that real average wages fully recovered and rose above their 1979 level.

During the period of declining average earnings, it was the less educated workers who suffered the greatest losses. Real earnings increased during the 1990s, and most workers have benefited from tighter labor markets. However, the demand for highly skilled labor has continued to contribute to economic inequality; well-off skilled workers continue to benefit more than those with less education.

Where the Jobs Will Be in 2008

The greatest number of new family-wage job opportunities between 1998 and 2008 will be those that require postsecondary education *but not a four-year degree*. There will be about 496,000 job openings for technicians, paralegals, health care workers, salespeople, and other occupations that require postsecondary education, but less than four years. By comparison, there will be 302,000 job openings for teachers, engineers, lawyers, and others that need 4-year degrees.

The economic future is not bright for workers in jobs requiring little or no training such as those serving food, cleaning offices, and unloading trucks. There will be plenty of jobs (462,000 openings), but they will pay poorly and offer few opportunities for advancement.

Employers Report a Severe Shortage of Skilled Workers

Do we have enough qualified people to take advantage of higher wage job opportunities? No.

In our 1999 survey of employers, 64 percent of firms looking for workers during the last 12 months had difficulty finding qualified job applicants. Workers with a vocational certificate or vocational associate degree were the hardest to find.

During the next ten years, without changes in funding and service delivery, the state's training system will only be able to provide about two-thirds of the needed workers with postsecondary vocational technical training. The shortfall has consequences for all of us. If employers can't find trained workers, Washington's economy will slow. Employers already believe that skill shortages are hurting the state's economy by lowering productivity, reducing product quality, and limiting output or sales.

The Workforce

Will We Have The Skills We Need?

Our workforce development system faces stiff challenges. Washington's businesses will need increasing numbers of skilled workers. And, many of our people need more access to education and training so that they can escape from low-wage jobs.

Demographic trends will make it difficult to meet employer needs. Population growth has declined, and our labor force growth rate will continue to slow. The population is aging, and an increasing percentage of labor market entrants will come from populations that traditionally have received less education.

Youth—Too many young people never complete high school (24 percent of 9th graders drop out before their class graduates), and too many still emerge from high school ready neither for further education nor work. Without a firm foundation, these young people play catch up for many years. Washington's students give their schools poor ratings for helping them see a link between school and the real world.

People of Color—Washington State's population is becoming more diverse; the growth rate for people of color exceeds that of the white population. The composition of the workforce also is changing; 26 percent of the net additions to Washington's workforce from 1990 to

"The Plan needs to address the rural/urban economy problem. There are fewer good jobs in the 'other Washington.' The Workforce Board can take a role by supporting rural economic development, education, and linking people to jobs. It is especially important that people in rural areas have better access to education."

Tom O'Brien, Director
Eastern Washington
Partnership at a
public meeting on
Washington's Unified
Plan for Workforce
Development,
January 2000

“When you raise the skills of a workforce, you also raise the income, education, and quality of life for tens of thousands of people in the state of Washington.”

Governor Gary Locke
announcing the creation
of the Eastern Agricultural
Skills Partnership at a
meeting in Pasco,
July 2000

2020 are expected to be people of color. For a variety of reasons, people of color have in the past obtained less education than whites and have experienced higher levels of unemployment.

The Economically Disadvantaged—The 1998 Washington Population Survey suggests that 16 percent of the adults in the state have household incomes below 175 percent of the poverty line. They are less well educated than the general population and they have lower rates of employment.

Women—Women have entered the labor market in increasing numbers over the last 25 years. By 2010, 66 percent of working-age women will be in the labor market. Although more women are working and there are fewer barriers to entering male-dominated fields, women’s progress has been uneven. They are still concentrated in clerical, sales, service, light manufacturing, and other jobs that tend to have lower pay.

People with Disabilities—People with disabilities represent another underutilized human resource. About 450,000 Washingtonians aged 16 to 64 have work-limiting disabilities. According to a 1996 survey of 2,500 Washington citizens with disabilities, many feel that their skills are unused and underutilized. Only 38 percent of people with disabilities have full- or part-time jobs.

Older People—The number of older workers in the state will rise dramatically—1 out of every 5 workers will be 55 or older by 2020, as opposed to 1 in 10 in 1990. With fewer younger workers

entering the labor force, employers will increasingly need to rely on hiring older workers, and market forces are already pushing firms in this direction.

We must ensure that all of our citizens—people of color and whites, women and men, people with disabilities, the economically disadvantaged and the prosperous, young and old—are prepared and positioned for success. We must equip all our citizens with a firm foundation of basic academic and workplace skills, as well as the technical skills needed in the new economy.

Our Workforce Development System

Can We Rise to the Challenge?

Washington has been a national leader in developing strategies to improve the quality of the workforce. Beginning in the early 1990s, Washington’s workforce development leaders focused on creating a more accountable, customer-centered, flexible, and coordinated workforce development system. More recently, Governor Gary Locke’s Executive Order 99-02 on Workforce Development, issued in September 1999, and the state’s implementation of WorkSource, are guiding change.

Executive Order on Workforce Development

Governor Locke’s Executive Order directed the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) to work with state and local workforce development partners to develop goals, objectives, and strategies to tackle what he considered the most significant challenges facing our workforce:

1. Closing the skills gap.
2. Enabling incumbent and dislocated workers to make smooth transitions in the new, changing economy.
3. Developing a wage progression strategy for low-income workers.

The Governor also called for the establishment of local Workforce Development Councils in 12 areas of the state. These councils were directed to set priorities for their area, as well as to address the challenges in the Governor’s Executive Order.

WorkSource

WorkSource is the cornerstone for improving access to employment and training services in “one stop.” It connects the employment and training services of many different programs and makes them accessible through a single point of access, in person or electronically. This approach will make it possible to serve greater numbers of people than in the past and to provide easier entry into the workforce development system.

Workforce Development Programs

Programs of the state’s workforce development system focus on employment, education, and training for jobs that do not require a baccalaureate degree—the education and training that prepares individuals for 75 percent of all jobs.

The workforce development system encompasses 20 state and federal programs, hundreds of education institutions and training providers, and thousands of students, workers, and employers. The following are among the key initiatives of the state’s workforce development system.

- *Reforming High School*—Many high schools are reexamining how they prepare students for a range of educational and career options after high school, increasing students’ basic workplace competencies and the technical skills needed to command a livable wage. Schools are integrating vocational and academic learning in career pathways related to occupational fields or industries. They are partnering with colleges and universities to improve the coordination of secondary and postsecondary education. They also are partnering with apprenticeship programs and with employers to help students prepare for careers through work-based learning experiences.

“Jobs in food processing are changing. At Del Monte, our machinery has become more sophisticated—more computerized. Hand labor jobs are fading fast. It is imperative that we have in place a system to upgrade our current and future employees’ skills. That’s why we’re involved in School-to-Work, the Eastern Washington Partnership, WDC [Workforce Development Council] activities and other workforce development initiatives.”

Dennis Flabetich,
Del Monte Foods,
October 2000

- *Skill Standards*—The state’s community and technical colleges are engaging business and labor to develop industry-defined skill standards that specify what employees must know and be able to do within a particular industry and occupation. Skill standards enable articulation between high school and college programs, recognize the skills of incoming participants, and provide certifications meaningful to employers. Skill standards in 18 occupational fields are complete or in progress.
- *Aiding Dislocated Workers*—Workers who have lost jobs in declining industries often need training before they can become reemployed. Washington has the most extensive programs in the nation for these workers. The state-funded Worker Retraining Program provides training at the state’s community and technical colleges and private career schools for demand occupations that pay a living wage. The program offers financial assistance and support services. The new Training Benefits Program offers additional weeks of unemployment insurance payments while dislocated workers are in retraining. Additionally, the Workforce Investment Act continues funding employment and training services for dislocated workers.
- *WorkFirst*—This is the state’s welfare-to-work program for recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and other low-income individuals. It requires TANF recipients to prepare for, find, and maintain employment leading to self-sufficiency. In addition to the basic work search program, WorkFirst programs provide:
 - Subsidized employment through community jobs.
 - Up to 12 weeks of intensive training for above entry-level job openings with particular employers.
 - Eight weeks of job search training.
 - Child care for individuals looking for work, and cash incentives for those still working 12 weeks after finding a job.
 - Call centers that help individuals get a better job.

Performance

Being Accountable for Results

The Governor and Legislature established the Workforce Board to create a customer-focused and collaborative approach to planning, coordination, and evaluation of Washington’s workforce training system. One of the Workforce Board’s primary statutory assignments is system accountability.

The Workforce Board, in cooperation with the agencies that administer the state’s major training programs and with

the private career schools, coordinates a cross-program accountability system: *Performance Management for Continuous Improvement* (PMCI). PMCI lays out seven desired outcomes for workforce development and a series of indicators for measuring progress in achieving the outcomes. The seven outcomes are not static targets, but conditions that should be increasingly true for all people.

We are incorporating elements newly required under the Workforce Investment Act and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 into the PMCI framework. The resulting system includes a variety of state and federal indicators that paint a descriptive picture of the state's workforce development system. The Workforce Board is using the indicators to set numerical performance standards for results. The Workforce Board also will use performance against these standards to determine performance-based consequences—incentives, sanctions, or other intervention measures.

And by July 1, 2000, the state will have in place a “consumer report system” of training provider progress and results, as well as course descriptions. The information, displayed on a web site easy to access and use, will help consumers make informed decisions about the right programs for them.

With clear goals, incentive and sanction policies, and solid information for the public, we're prepared to be accountable for results.

Seven Desired Outcomes for Workforce Development

- **Competencies**

Washington's workforce possesses the skills and abilities required in the workplace.

- **Employment**

Washington's workforce finds employment opportunities.

- **Earnings**

Washington's workforce achieves a family-wage standard of living from earned income.

- **Productivity**

Washington's workforce is productive.

- **Reduced Poverty**

Washington's workforce lives above poverty.

- **Customer Satisfaction**

Workforce development participants and their employers are satisfied with workforce development services and results.

- **Return on Investment**

Workforce development programs provide returns that exceed program costs.

“... teens are more likely to report enough guidance in the more delicate issues of drugs, drinking, and sexual relationships than they are in issues involving school work and college/career preparation.”

*“The Shell Poll” results,
Summer 1999*

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for Washington State’s Workforce Development System

Our Agenda for Action

The Workforce Board and its partners developed the following goals, objectives, and strategies to meet Governor Locke’s directive. The work is ambitious, and all of us share the responsibility for success. We will all have something to gain—as citizens, parents, educators, businesses, labor leaders, etc.—if we make speedy progress.

Challenge One: The Skills Gap

GOAL 1 ► *To close the gap between the needs of employers for skilled workers and the supply of Washington residents prepared to meet that need.*

OBJECTIVE 1.1 ► *Create private-public partnerships to enable individuals to move up job and career ladders throughout their lives.*

Strategies

- Form industry skill panels to assess skill needs and develop training programs.

Lead Organizations: Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, Workforce Development Councils, Business Organizations, and State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

- Provide high-quality labor market information.

Lead Organizations: Employment Security Department and Workforce Development Councils.

- Develop modular curricula linked to industry skill standards.

Lead Organizations: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and its Office of Adult Literacy, and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

OBJECTIVE 1.2 ► *Increase the number of young people who understand and act on career opportunities available through vocational-technical education and training programs.*

Strategies

- Enhance career guidance.

Lead Organizations: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, Workforce Development Councils (Youth Councils), and Business.

- Develop secondary vocational-technical program standards.

Lead Organization: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

- Increase mentor and work-based learning opportunities.

Lead Organizations: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and Business.

- Create state education policies that support work-related education.

Lead Organizations: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

OBJECTIVE 1.3 ► *Increase the capacity of high schools, community and technical colleges, and apprenticeship programs to provide high quality workforce education and training programs.*

Strategies

- Partner with industries to provide facilities, faculty, and equipment in high-wage, high-demand fields.

Lead Organizations: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Workforce Development Councils, and Business.

- Expand apprenticeship training and apprenticeship preparation programs.

Lead Organizations: Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council, Department of Labor and Industries, and Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committees.

- Increase the number of individuals prepared to teach in high-wage, high-demand fields.

Lead Organizations: Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

- Replicate best practices in vocational-technical education.

Lead Organizations: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Challenge Two: Incumbent and Dislocated Workers

GOAL 2 ► *To enable workers to make smooth transitions so that they, and their employers, may fully benefit from the new, changing economy, by putting in place a coherent strategy for dislocated and incumbent worker training.*

OBJECTIVE 2.1 ► *Increase economic competitiveness and prevent dislocation by expanding customized incumbent worker training.*

Strategy

- Increase customized incumbent worker training.

Lead Organizations: Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board and State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

“We need to foster a flexible education system—one that integrates work and training and that serves the needs both of experienced workers at different stages in their careers and of students embarking on their initial course of study.”

Alan Greenspan,
Chairman of the Federal
Reserve Board,
April 2000

“The scant supply of software, information systems, and other engineering talent puts Washington companies at a significant competitive disadvantage.”

Dennis Brewer,
Chair of the Higher
Education Task Force,
November 1999

OBJECTIVE 2.2 ► *Enhance business expansion and retention strategies.*

Strategies

- Promote workplace practices that enhance competitiveness.

Lead Organization: Office of Trade and Economic Development.

- Enhance early warning system of possible dislocations.

Lead Organizations: Employment Security Department, Office of Trade and Economic Development, and Workforce Development Councils.

- Market retention services to at-risk businesses and their workers.

Lead Organizations: Employment Security Department, Office of Trade and Economic Development, and Workforce Development Councils.

OBJECTIVE 2.3 ► *Return unemployed workers to suitable work in as short a time as possible.*

Strategies

- Continue best practices.

Lead Organization: Employment Security Department.

- Put resources up front so WorkSource frontline services are of high quality.

Lead Organizations: Employment Security Department and Workforce Development Councils.

- Provide retraining for high-demand fields.

Lead Organization: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

- Establish a coherent, flexible, and accessible dislocated worker service strategy.

Lead Organization: Governor’s Office.

Challenge Three: Wage Progression for Low-Income Workers

GOAL 3 ► *To assist disadvantaged youth, persons with disabilities, new labor market entrants, recent immigrants, and other low-wage workers in moving up the job ladder during their lifetimes by developing a wage progression strategy for low-income workers. Specific progress will be made in improving operating agencies and reducing the earnings gap facing people of color, adults with disabilities, and women.*

OBJECTIVE 3.1 ► *Keep kids in school.*

Strategies

- Develop “hands-on” learning opportunities.

Lead Organization: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

- Link “second chance” programs for out-of-school youth with the “first chance” system.

Lead Organizations: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Workforce Development Councils (Youth Councils).

OBJECTIVE 3.2 ► *Assist unemployed individuals to gain and retain employment.*

Strategies

- Develop a more effective labor exchange.

Lead Organization: Employment Security Department.

- Remove barriers and disincentives for people with unique obstacles to employment.

Lead Organizations: Department of Social and Health Services, Employment Security Department, and Workforce Development Councils.

- Take advantage of programs with demonstrated success in wage progression.

Lead Organizations: Department of Social and Health Services, Employment Security Department, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Office of Trade and Economic Development, and Workforce Development Councils.

- Expand access to support services.

Lead Organizations: Department of Social and Health Services and Workforce Development Councils.

- Research subpopulations that fail to have wage progression.

Lead Organizations: Employment Security Department, Department of Social and Health Services, and Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

OBJECTIVE 3.3 ► *Increase training for low-income individuals.*

Strategies

- Expand training opportunities for low-income individuals.

Lead Organizations: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Employment Security Department, Workforce Development Councils, Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council, and Joint Apprenticeship Committees.

- Provide training programs at times and locations that are accessible to working people.

Lead Organization: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

“When you look at the phenomenal economic growth produced by technology and the huge increase in demand for highly skilled workers, it is clear that our ability to continue benefitting from technology will largely depend on how well we educate the next generation.”

Bill Gates,
Microsoft Chairman,
statement before the
Joint Economic
Committee, 2000

“The long-standing problem of categorical ‘funding silos’ is a serious barrier to make the system work well for customers. A failure to make changes at the state-level will hamper our efforts to make system reform work well.”

Mary Jean Ryan,
Director of the Office
of Economic Development,
City of Seattle commenting
on the State Unified Plan,
January 2000

- Create and offer incentives to increase training.

Lead Organizations: Employment Security Department, Workforce Development Councils, and Department of Social and Health Services.

- Increase basic skills instruction in the workplace and integrate it into vocational training.

Lead Organization: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and its Office of Adult Literacy.

- Develop programs that are responsive to the unique needs of agricultural workers.

Lead Organizations: Employment Security Department, and State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and its Office of Adult Literacy.

Challenge Four: Facilitate the Integration of Workforce Development Programs

GOAL 4 ► *To make the vision of WorkSource a reality so that workforce development programs are customer-friendly, broadly accessible, and fully committed to Continuous Quality Improvement.*

OBJECTIVE 4.1 ► Provide one-stop service to workforce development customers.

Strategy

- Establish WorkSource as the common entry point for the state’s workforce development programs.

Lead Organizations: Employment Security Department and Workforce Development Councils.